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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ISTANBUL 001867

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/SE

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [TU](#) [AM](#)

SUBJECT: TURKEY-ARMENIA: TRACK TWO ON TRACK?

REF: A. ADANA 183

[B](#). ISTANBUL 1680

[C](#). ISTANBUL 1780

Classified By: CONSUL GENERAL DEBORAH K. JONES FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

[1](#). (C) Summary: Turkish-Armenian "Track Two" efforts continue to chip away at old attitudes. A New Jersey-based Armenian Orthodox Church official was pleased with his reception in Ankara during a recent visit, and plans to organize tours to Turkey with diaspora Armenians next year. "Alternative Armenian Conference" participants created an e-mail "list serve," including U.S.-based Armenian academics, to maintain their dialogue and debate. A glossy women's magazine targets Turkish and Armenian women, focusing on topics of mutual interest. These efforts notwithstanding, an analyst at one Istanbul think-tank told us Turkey's Armenia policy cannot evolve at the expense of the Azeris, in the absence of progress on Nagorno-Karabakh. End Summary.

"The Diaspora is not Monolithic"

[1](#)2. (C) Reverend Father Papken Anoushian of New Jersey's Armenian Orthodox church and Noyan Soyak, Vice Chairman of the Turkish-Armenian Business Development Council (TABDC), told pol/econoffs October 5 about Anoushian's recent visit to Ankara, where he met with the Turkish MFA's Huseyin Avni Bicakli and Huseyin Avni Karslioglu, and AKP Vice-Chair Reha Denemec. Anoushian shared with them his desire to mobilize support for Turkey's EU accession in the diaspora, and to build a platform for cooperation. He spoke of bringing a group of 50-60 to visit Turkey next year, and is considering how the Armenian diaspora in Europe can assist Turkey's lobbying efforts with the EU (Turkey needs some help in this area, Soyak pointed out). Soyak claimed the Armenian community in the U.S. is more diverse than one might think, and that more progressive diaspora elements are ripe for this kind of mobilization. He allowed that he is pleased with the ongoing restoration project on Akdamar Island (ref A), but said serious work must be done in Ani, where he claimed a sub-standard renovation approach was being slapped together.

Track Two in Print

[1](#)3. (U) The Turkish and Armenian Women's Magazine -- a glossy, professional, and relatively expensive (USD 3.50) quarterly -- will offer its third issue later this year. Turkish publisher Sule Kilicarslan told poloff in August that the magazine, with a circulation of 15,000, serves as a bridge between women in the two countries because it "doesn't get into politics," but focuses on common regional interests. Articles in the next edition will reportedly focus on the Akdamar restoration, a Galatasaray-Yerevan University exchange program, the Hatay Meeting of Civilizations, an Ara Guler photo exhibit and city profiles of Mardin, Turkey, and Gyumri, Armenia. Kilicarslan has her own communications company and is the Chair of the Eurasia Cultural and Social Development Association. She received support for the project from American University's Center for Global Peace, but her first Armenian partner experienced (unspecified) "pressure" in 2003 and pulled out of the venture. Kilicarslan is pleased with her new Yerevan-based joint publisher, Gohar Dubost, who also owns a communications company, and will spend at least one day in Yerevan with her as each new issue is planned. Among the top destinations of courtesy copies of the magazine are the Turkish Parliament and Turkish Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul.

Track Two On Line

[1](#)4. (C) Led by University of Michigan's Muge Gocek, a number of presenters at the Alternative Armenian Conference (ref B) formed an e-mail "list serve" after the conference, and have included U.S.-based Armenian academics in their communications, as well. Representing University of Minnesota, the Royal Military College of Canada, the Massachusetts-based National Association for Armenian Studies and Research, Istanbul's Sabanci University, and Ankara University's Political Science Faculty, this bi-communal

electronic community has discussed issues ranging from whether only Turks, or Armenians, too, should sign a petition in support of Hrant Dink (ref C); whether Orhan Pamuk backtracked on his comments in his recent CNN-Turk interview; and whether one participant should be criticized for using the term "bilateral fetishism," as it suggests a moral equivalence between those seeking recognition of genocide and those opposing it. Finally, a Michigan-based professor, part of a Turkish-Armenian group that has been studying together the events of 1915-16 for some time now, expressed his gratification that "a small ball that...started rolling in Chicago five years ago has picked up a lot of steam..."

Conferences, and more conferences

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15. (C) Conferences on "Armenian" issues are on the rise. Istanbul University -- accusing the "Alternative" conference of being one-sided -- announced its intent to organize a "more balanced" conference next year. (Note: Hrant Dink has said he will not participate in that event. End note.) Kayseri's Erciyes University will reportedly hold a symposium in April 2006 entitled "The Art of Living Together in Ottoman Society: Turkish-Armenian Relations Sample." (Comment: It may be no coincidence that Kayseri is FM Gul's home town and recently hosted EU Enlargement Commissioner Ollie Rehn. End comment.)

Not So Fast...

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16. (C) TESEV's Mensur Akgun told visiting EUR/SE Director Doug Silliman October 13 that despite the breaking of taboos and the current perception of motion, the GOT must continue to be cautious on Armenia. To take the initiative and announce an opening of borders is not as easy as it might appear, he claimed, even if the GOT wanted to be bold. It has as much to do with a larger set of issues related to Turkey's Russia policy, as it does with the "genocide" question and getting over the past. Opening to Armenia at the expense of the Azeris simply cannot be done, he claimed, hoping that the Minsk group would continue to make progress toward a Nagorno-Karabakh settlement and allow these interdependent issues to move forward.

17. (C) Comment: Despite the unlikelihood of major bilateral breakthroughs between Turkey and Armenia any time soon, the Turkish public may be more prepared when this eventually happens, as a result of increasing openness here to dialog on Turkish-Armenian relations and related topics. End Comment.  
JONES